

Statement of

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NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

Before the
Committee on Post Office and Civil Service
House of Representatives

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I welcome this opportunity to appear before you this morning to speak in support of H.R.7381.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration is strongly of the opinion that the proposed legislation should be enacted (1) to permit the Government to capitalize on certain skills, competence, and experience in the areas of aerospace science and technology possessed by a sizable group of military personnel who have completed their service careers, and (2) to correct certain inequities in the present statutes pertaining to the Government employment of these personnel.

Many of the abilities and skills and much of the knowledge which are valuable to NASA are possessed by certain military personnel who have been closely associated with missile and military space programs and aeronautics. Collectively, this

body of men, educated and skilled in aerospace science and technology, represents a reservoir of knowledge and experience which constitutes a national asset of inestimable value. Unless this limited group of specialists can be attracted to remain in the Government, this asset will not be available directly to the Government's space program. At the present time, 223 active duty military officers are detailed to NASA by the Department of Defense. These officers are primarily engineers, physical scientists, and administrative specialists whose backgrounds are directly pertinent to NASA's work. Of these 223 officers, 42 are of senior rank, and are performing either technical or management assignments. These senior grade officers represent the type of personnel NASA desires to employ because of their specialized education and experience. The number of personnel so employed would be probably fewer than fifty in a fiscal year; however, each selection would represent the utilization of very specialized talent and would significantly benefit the national space program.

The preferential treatment accorded retired reserve officers as compared to retired regulars under the current dual

compensation law is felt within NASA. To permit one to accept his retired pay and not the other is unfair. There appears to be no valid reason for this distinction.

I favor the formula in H.R.7381 which would allow not less than full civilian pay plus \$2,000 of the retired pay and one-half of the remainder of the retired pay. Any more restrictive limitations would largely nullify the new legislation as a means of assisting NASA to meet its specialized needs. NASA needs senior technical personnel highly trained and experienced in the space sciences and engineering. Officers meeting these criteria have usually attained senior rank in their Service. The vacancies in NASA which such officers are qualified to fill carry salaries approaching \$20,000. Acceptance of NASA employment by these officers would necessitate forfeiting almost all of their retired pay if more restrictive limitations are imposed than those which are contained in the bill. Under these circumstances, NASA as a rule cannot successfully compete with industry for the services of these technically competent and experienced people.

The following cases are cited as typical of the problems being experienced by NASA in attempting to fill key position vacancies by employing retired military personnel competent and experienced in the aerospace field:

(1) A Colonel recently retired from the United States Air Force after 23 years of military service including Program Management, Commander of the Test Wing at Cape Canaveral during the critical Thor-Atlas period, and Test Commander at the Special Weapons Center. He was offered \$20,000 as an Assistant Director at NASA's Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston. However, he declined in favor of a \$27,000 position with Space Technology Laboratories in which position he would still be able to draw his \$7,000 military retirement. Mr. Walter Williams, our Deputy Director at Houston, believes the Colonel would have accepted the NASA position if he could have retained all his retired pay.

(2) A Navy Captain presently on duty at NASA's Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston, as a Branch Chief, previously served as Range Operations Officer at Point Mugu, California,

and in space surveillance at Dahlgren, Virginia. His experience is appropriate to work in the development of our Apollo Tracking Network, including coordination with the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, the Goddard Space Flight Center, and military tracking systems. He has requested retirement from the Navy, and has indicated an interest in a position with NASA or any other Federal research and development agency. However, this Captain will not consider a position unless it would be at the \$18,000-\$20,000 level, in order to compensate in substantial measure for the loss of retired pay.

(3) An active duty Navy Captain, presently on detail at NASA Headquarters as a Division Director, has had 22 years of military service. He is considering retirement from the Navy and will be eligible to receive more than \$6,000 retirement pay, which he would have to waive under the existing laws if employed in NASA as a civilian at a similar level of responsibility. With his qualifications, his services would be sought by industry. While he would like to continue in the NASA program after retirement, he doubts that he could afford to accept the financial penalty.

Two United States Air Force Colonels who are currently occupying key positions at our George C. Marshall Space Flight Center at Huntsville, Alabama, are additional examples in this category:

NASA has in its employ at the present time several senior retired regular military personnel, one of whom is on the Deputy Associate Administrator level. These officers have served in industry at much higher combined industry and retired military pay than they are presently receiving at NASA. Like many civilian personnel in the higher executive brackets, they are willing to forego, for awhile at least, the attraction of the higher salary of industry in exchange for the experience and the personal satisfaction of participating first hand in the Nation's space program. However, NASA can expect to lose the services of some of these men after a period of time if they must continue to forfeit all or most of their retired pay. This financial penalty in some cases approaches one-half to two-thirds of their salary at NASA.

I therefore respectfully urge your favorable consideration of H.R. 7381.